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## PREVENTING CRUELTY TO CHILDREN

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The state of Massachusetts has one of the most thoroughly organized societies for the prevention of cruelty to children in the United States, and employs a large number of agents. These agents are given a three weeks' vacation, to be taken some time during the summer; and to carry on their work while they are away, the society employs a number of temporary agents. It fell to my lot to take one of these positions, and to spend two months and a half in the employ of the society. I thus had the advantage of viewing the work of the society from the double standpoint of an outsider and an insider. The work proved so novel and fascinating to me, and since leaving it I have found on the part of others such a combination of curiosity and unenlightenment as to the exact nature of the work of such a society, that it has seemed justifiable to attempt to give my experience a degree of publicity.

It is a strange and significant fact that the movement for the prevention of cruelty to children was subsequent to, and a direct outgrowth of, the work for animals, and it was the work of years to rid the newer movement of anomalous ideas and practices which clung to it on account of its origin. The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was incorporated in 1868, while the charter of the children's society is dated ten years later. The purpose of the newer society, as stated in the charter, is "awakening interest in the abuses to which children are exposed by the intemperance, cruelty, or cupidity of parents and guardians, and to help the enforcement of existing laws on the subject, procure needed legislation, and for kindred work." As might be expected, the first efforts of the society were devoted to remedying and preventing physical abuse and neglect, and it is an evidence, not only of a broadened scope, but of a vast amount of work already accomplished, that the society now expends a large share of its energies

on other less obvious and more insidious forms of neglect—the moral and intellectual.

It is not the purpose of this paper to go into the history of this society, but rather to examine its present organization and methods of work. The headquarters of the society are in a fine old brick residence building which stands at the corner of Mt. Vernon and Joy streets, the highest point in Boston proper, almost within the shadow of the great State House dome. The name of the society appears on a modest sign, nestling among the vines which clothe the front of the building, and the legend, "Do not Ring. Walk In," inscribed on the front door, makes the visitor feel welcome. The whole of the first floor has the appearance of a regular business office. There are private rooms where the general secretary and the organizing secretary have their desks, a second room full of filing-cases and tables where the clerks and stenographers are at work, and then a large room full of desks, given over to the use of the special agents. Everything appears orderly, systematic, and bustling, and in fact the work of the society is administered on a thoroughly up-to-date and businesslike basis. The central office staff consists of a secretary-general-agent, an organizing secretary, fifteen or sixteen agents who do the work of investigating, prosecuting, etc., three clerks, four stenographers, an examining physician, a matron, and an assistant matron. Besides these, there are resident agents in Worcester, New Bedford, and Northampton, and three of the agents spend about half their time in Brockton, Beverly, and Fall River, respectively. In addition to the regular agents of the society there is a large number of voluntary agents and representatives, with the co-operation of whom it is possible to handle a case of cruelty on short notice in almost any part of the state. The society stands ready to send one of its regular agents to any spot in the state where he is needed, and one of them spends all of his time in work on cases in remote sections.

The society has no organic connection with the government of city or state, and its agents have, as such, no official standing, though several of them have been made Massachusetts special district police officers, in order to enable them to serve their own warrants, etc., or to make arrests if absolutely necessary. This

latter power is seldom exercised, however. When the strong arm of the law is needed, appeal is usually made to the regular police officers. And it may be said, in this connection, that in general the police force of Boston is to be commended highly for its attitude toward the society, and its readiness to co-operate in its work. Some stations are more in sympathy than others, but as a rule the officers are ready to lend every possible aid to the agents of the society, and are active and intelligent both in reporting and in handling cases, and seem to have the interests of children thoroughly at heart.

Though the society has no official powers, it does a large share of its work along legal lines, and its agents are frequent visitors to the various courts of Massachusetts, where they have a semi-official standing and are given special recognition. One of the peculiar results of the historical development of the society, and of the laws under which it works, is that up to the year 1909, in all cases of cruelty or neglect which were taken into court, the child was made the defendant; the charge was being a neglected child, and the parents or guardians were summoned as witnesses on the side of the defense. This was made necessary by the reading of the neglect law, which was as follows:

A police, district, or municipal court or a trial justice, upon a complaint made by any person that any child under sixteen years of age within its or his jurisdiction, by reason of orphanage or of the neglect, crime, *cruelty, insanity*, or drunkenness or other vice of its parents, is growing up without education or without salutary control, *or without proper physical care,*<sup>1</sup> or in circumstances exposing him to lead an idle and dissolute life, or is dependent upon public charity, may issue a precept to bring such child before said court or trial justice. . . .

In the year 1909, however, largely through the efforts of the S.P.C.C. (as it is familiarly called), a change was introduced into the law by which it became possible to make the parents the defendants in cases of ill treatment of children. This was accomplished through an amendment to the non-support law. After the clause in that law which specifies the person guilty of non-support, was introduced the clause from the neglect law, specifying the nature of neglect. Thus the neglectful parent was brought

<sup>1</sup> The phrases in italics were added in 1909.

into the same category with non-supporting parent, and subjected to the same penalties. This marks a decided advance in the children's laws of the state.

Changes in legal procedure, however, require a long time, and in spite of the new law, most of the cases are still conducted under the old method with the child as defendant. One of the agents of the S.P.C.C. last summer brought the first case into the Brockton court under the new law, and fortunately won it. The judge was highly pleased with the course of the trial, and stated that hereafter, in that court, they would put the blame where it belonged directly, make the parents the defendants and charge them with neglect or cruelty.

The wording of the law admits of a very broad interpretation, and makes it possible for the society to deal with almost every form of ill treatment to which a child could be subjected, as in fact it does.

Cases of neglect are usually brought up for hearing in the municipal, district, or police court, within the jurisdiction of which the parents reside. There are courts in Charlestown, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Roxbury, East Boston, etc. All of these courts now have session on a stated day each week, and all juvenile cases are heard privately, either in the judges' room, or in the main courtroom, all persons not directly connected with the case having been excluded from the room. In Boston proper, however, there is a special juvenile court, presided over by Judge Baker (Judges Rubenstein and Leveroni), where all juvenile cases, and only those, are heard. Of course there is a wide variety of juvenile cases, other than those of neglect, which are brought into the juvenile sessions, including the various forms of juvenile delinquency. The Boston juvenile court sets apart Friday of each week as a special day on which the cases of the S.P.C.C. have precedence over all others, and the agents plan to have their cases come up on that day as far as possible.

The principal class of cases which the society brings into the juvenile court are those where it has been decided necessary to remove the children from their parents or guardians. These are very numerous, and are naturally so conspicuous that many people

have conceived the idea that the prize function of the society is taking children away, and it is very commonly thought of as a society for the breaking-up of homes. It is true that the most obvious thing to do in a case of neglect is to remove the child to better surroundings, and the early practice of the society was inclined to follow this idea. If a case could not be made into a court case, it was considered hardly worth bothering with. How far this fails to represent the present work of the society is shown by the fact that out of 7,368 different children dealt with in 1909, only 2,058 were taken into court. It is a basic principle of the society that the removal of children is the final step, to be taken only when conditions are so aggravated that there appears to be no hope of securing proper influences in the existing environment. In such a case, the society acts on the assumption that there is no real home there. It regards a home as something more than a group of parents and children. Certain fundamental virtues of love, unselfishness, morality, and obedience are considered essential to the existence of a true home. Where the rudiments of a real home exist, the society exhausts every expedient to build it up into a proper environment for children before it takes the extreme step of removing the children. In general the society never takes action in cases where there is no blame or culpability attaching to the parents. Cases where the evils are wholly due to misfortune are considered outside of its province, and are referred to some of the charitable agencies. It "invariably refuses to break up a family because of poverty."

The initial step in the treatment of a case of cruelty by the S.P.C.C. is, in almost every instance, the receipt of a complaint from some outside party. The agents of the society never go about looking for trouble. This is for two reasons: first, the society wishes to avoid as far as possible all appearance of being an inquisitorial agency; second, the capacity of the office force is so over-taxed looking after cases that are reported, that they would have no time to search for others if they were so inclined. These complaints come from a hundred different sources, from police officers and every kind of charitable organization, from neighbors, relatives, and friends, from the husband against the wife, and the wife against the husband. Some of them are inspired by spite, and some

by desire for revenge. Another class of complaint is the anonymous. Complaints of this sort are quite numerous, and are the subject of a good deal of discussion among the agents of the society. Many of them feel that the results from them are so meager that the society would do better to ignore them entirely. Instigators of spite cases are very likely to conceal themselves behind the veil of anonymity, while in many cases investigation reveals simply ignorance on the part of the complainant. But for the most part, the complaints are bona fide and refer to conditions which at the very least demand investigation.

As soon as a complaint is received, the data are entered on duplicate sheets of paper. One is the record sheet, which is filed away in the cabinet, and is never allowed to leave the office except under extraordinary circumstances. The other is the so-called "blue-sheet," which is given to the agent for his guidance, and for keeping notes of his investigations. Two index-cards, one by the name of the parent and the other by the address, are made out, and filed in the proper cabinet. Each case is given a number, which is stamped on every document relating to it, and by which it can be immediately identified.

The process of investigation of a new case begins by looking up the family in the index to see whether it has ever been dealt with by the society before. It is more than likely that such will be the case. So frequently do cases come up for treatment over and over again, that the society hardly ever regards a case as definitely settled until all of the children are of age. If a previous record of the family is found, this of course gives the agent a great advantage in carrying out his investigation. Another preliminary step which is invariably taken is the inquiry of a confidential exchange of information, which is used by over one hundred charitable agencies of Massachusetts. This exchange is managed by the Boston Associated Charities, but covers the whole state. With it the co-operating societies register the names and dates of all cases. Accordingly, when the agent of the S.P.C.C. makes inquiry of this exchange, the clerk in charge looks up the case, and if it has previously been dealt with by some other agency (as is quite likely to be the case), the S.P.C.C. is furnished with the name of the other

society, and the record is marked, "known to [for instance] the Children's Aid Society," with the date. Thus the agent of the S.P.C.C. is in a position to get a condensed history of the family, so far as it has figured in the work of any society, and so far as that society wishes to make the facts known. He is thereby enabled to avoid duplicating or interfering with the work of some other agency, or making mistakes which ignorance of the family's previous record might have entailed.

With these facts in hand, the agent starts out on a tour of investigation. One principle of the society is always to go, first of all, to the parents themselves. This is considered the more straightforward, as well as the more practical, way. Agents are allowed to vary from this practice at their discretion, however, and it is frequently done. Occasionally the *amour propre* of the complainant is very much injured because the agent did not come to him first of all. But in most cases, a visit to the family is the first essential step. It gives the agent a first-hand impression of the conditions, brings him into personal touch with the parents and children, and gives him the opportunity to put himself on friendly terms with them if possible. This is of extreme importance. In perhaps the majority of cases, the first step toward the solution of the problem is the breaking-down of a barrier of hostility erected by the parents. If they can be convinced that the agent is really their friend, that he has not come to take away their children or to spy into their private life, but to help them solve some of the difficulties of existence, the task is well on its way to completion. And when this relation is once established, it is amazing how completely all reserve gives way, and how thoroughly the agent is taken into the confidence of his clients. There is probably no other form of social work which brings the agent more closely in touch with the most intimate relations of family life. The people with whom the society deals are, for the most part, simple and childlike at heart, though ignorant, stolid, and unresponsive on the exterior, and when the right relation has been established, they discuss their personal and family affairs with the most complete confidence and lack of reserve. The new agent is sometimes almost appalled to find himself dealing with social forces which are absolutely elemental.



Occasionally the agent has to overcome a prejudice which is due to ignorance of his identity. Experiences like the following are not unusual. One of the agents called at a house where he had been once before. He asked the small boy who answered his knock whether his mother was in, and received an emphatic negative. But when he pressed his question further, and asked the boy whether he was sure she was out, the youngster looked at him again, and turning, called back into the room, "Say! Ma, this ain't the insurance man; it's the other feller."

The visit to the family is, however, only the first step. The proper treatment of the case demands the fullest information that can possibly be gained of the history and character of the family. As someone has said, the best agent is the one who can know a family better in three days than the neighbors do in three years. To accomplish this, the agent should visit a large number of the neighbors, the nearest police station, any doctor, hospitals, or churches with which the family have been associated, all relatives of either parent, etc. The clues which present themselves when such an investigation is contemplated are almost innumerable, and as the agent has a most limited time to spend on any one case, he has to select only those sources of information which seem most important and promising. It is usually possible, however, to get a very satisfactory understanding of the real nature of the case in a comparatively short time.

Having thus gained an idea of the nature of the case, the next step is to formulate a plan. As no two cases are identical, no stereotyped method of procedure will be adequate. The formation of the plan is one of the most important steps in the handling of the case, and in making it the agents keep in close touch with the general agent, whose wide experience is thus brought to bear on all of the important cases. To accomplish this, the agents dictate the progress of each day's investigation (so far as possible within a day after it is made) to stenographers, who enter the data on the permanent records. All records of cases which are in process of investigation pass under the general agent's eye every morning, and those which require special consideration are made the subject of personal consultation between him and the agent in charge.

It not infrequently happens that the conditions of the case are such as to make the first step in the solution perfectly obvious. There is just one thing to be done. Such was a case assigned to me the very first morning I went to work. An officer of the Charlestown police station telephoned over that there was a boy of thirteen running the streets, whose mother was dead, and whose father had that morning been sent to the house of correction for ten days for drunkenness. I at once went over, and found that the boy's mother had died about six months previously of drink. The father had at one time been a hard drinker, but had reformed and up to the time of the mother's death had kept sober for three years. Soon after her death, however, he went wrong again, lost his position, drank up all his savings, even his clothes, and finally was sent to the "Island," as reported. There was an older brother who had a position as stenographer for the government. He had not lived at home for some time, and had sailed two or three days previously for Panama, and so could not be reached. The woman from whom the father rented rooms had been looking after the boy for some time, but could not afford to do it any longer. There was obviously just one thing to do. I got out a warrant and took the boy with me.

In other instances, it takes more investigation to find out the real state of the case, but when this has been definitely determined, the course to be pursued is equally plain. One of the veteran officers of the Charlestown police station reported a case of two children, a boy and girl of nine and seven years respectively, whose father had deserted, and whose mother was found drunk on the floor of their wretched tenement. On my first visit I found nobody at home. Inquiries among the neighbors elicited the information that the father, a hard-working, respectable man, had left home about three weeks before, utterly discouraged with his attempt to make the mother live a decent life, and had not been heard of since. On my next visit, I found the mother and the two children at home. The mother was a rather good-looking woman of about thirty. She informed me that everything was all right, that she knew where the father was, and expected to hear from him very soon. I made several other visits, and learned from neighbors that the

children were frequently found asleep on doorsteps at all times of night, and had been taken in and cared for, for days at a time, by the neighbors. One of them had repeatedly put the children to bed in her own rooms, while she washed their tattered clothes—the only ones they possessed. The police officers told of finding the mother rushing around the streets at midnight, clad in her night clothes, in a demented state. I made up my mind that something must be done at once, and went again to the house, only to find that mother and children had disappeared. This settled the matter. I traced them to East Boston and had the children brought before the court.

But in many cases the solution is by no means so simple. As stated previously, the fundamental principle of the society is to keep the family together if possible. All the resources of church, relatives, moral suasion, and even threats must be made use of before the final step is taken. In the majority of cases these efforts are successful. Sometimes, a single visit of the agent is sufficient to work a cure. I recall one case of the reported abuse of a thirteen-year-old girl by an apparently respectable family. I made one visit to the home, and was told by the mother, between sobs, that the only trouble was that she was too good to the child. The child was most disobedient, unruly, and complaining, and shrieked if her mother so much as combed her hair. I made subsequent inquiries in the neighborhood, and while I could not get any positive evidence against the parents, I was informed that since the time of my visit things had quieted down decidedly, and the case was dropped.

Very frequently, however, the agent has to make repeated and frequent visits to keep things going at all satisfactorily. What the family needs is some moral backing, some bracing-up from an outside source. These are perhaps the most satisfactory of all cases, from the agent's individual point of view—where by the force of his own personality he can get on terms of helpfulness with a family, and gradually bring them back to self-respect and decency. It is the work of months, perhaps of years. Some of the agents have cases which have been on their list ever since they began work with the society.

I was not with the society long enough to have any of my cases

develop in this way. Some of them were apparently started in this direction. One of them was the family of a young typesetter, a very capable fellow, who could earn eighteen to twenty dollars a week. They had had a good home but he had got in with a bad crowd and had taken to drinking heavily. Gradually they sank in the social scale, until when I found them they were living in a four-room tenement, one room of which they did not use. They had lost one set of furniture, and had just secured another poor and meager outfit on the instalment plan. There were no bed clothes, the house was filthy, and there was nothing to cook on, except a small, smoky oil stove. There were five children, ranging from nine years to nine months, the baby a puny, sickly little specimen of humanity. The mother was a rather incapable person, as is shown by the fact that one day when the baby was very sick, she fed him an ice-cream cone, all of which he ate. The father was happy-go-lucky and improvident, fond of good clothes and cigarettes. While the family was in this condition, he bought a twenty-dollar gold watch on the instalment plan. When I first undertook the case, the mother told me that her husband was doing better, working steadily, and they were getting along quite well. I made frequent visits to the home, and found no special improvement. I visited the father's employers, who told me that they had done all in their power to keep the young man straight, even keeping him a half-hour after closing time, and sending the foreman part way home with him, to keep him out of the clutches of a gang of wild fellows who were waiting for him; but all to no purpose. So things went on. It is one of the principles on which the society works that oftentimes things have to get worse before they can get better. Conditions did not seem sufficiently aggravated to warrant me in taking any decided steps, and I waited for them to get worse. They very speedily did.

One day the mother sent for me by telephone. I found that the father had quit his job and gone on a prolonged spree, and the family were at their wit's end. The baby was very sick, and the house was in an awful condition. I urged the mother to send the baby to a hospital and she promised to do so. A day or so later, I went down prepared to take some radical action, probably to

have the father arrested for non-support. I found him at home for the first time—it was, in fact, the first time I had seen him. He was just recovering from his debauch, and was in a most pitiable condition. He was shaking all over with weakness and nervous exhaustion, and threatened suicide and all manner of dire expedients. He was in a most repentant frame of mind, and promised to reform completely, if only I would not take his children away. I told him I had very slight expectation of taking the children away, but that I was of a very strong mind to send him up for non-support. He pleaded with me earnestly, and in spite of his condition, I could not help liking him. Finally, after a long and severe berating, I told him I would give him one more chance. He promised never to touch another drop of liquor as long as he lived, and to search faithfully for another position, and keep it. The next week was a hard one for him. He tramped the streets, looking for work. practically one whole day he spent looking for employment in Cambridge thinking that in a “dry” town there would be less temptation for him to go astray. He appealed for aid to the overseers of the poor, and they put him to work heaving barrels—the hardest two days’ work he ever did in his life, he told me—and paid him for it in provisions. Finally, he saw an advertisement at a printing establishment for a female typesetter. He went in and persuaded the foreman to give him a job, at several dollars less than he had been earning in his last position, but with the prospect of a raise if he did well. The last time I saw him, he had been working in this place about three weeks. He told me that he had not touched a drop, and that he was feeling better than he had for years. What has become of him since, I cannot even guess. It is one of the sad things about going into that sort of work temporarily, that after one has almost lived with a family for a few weeks, sharing their most intimate griefs and burdens, and becoming vitally interested in their welfare, he must cut loose from them, and drop them completely out of his life forever. This case was transferred to one of the women agents, who will do all that possibly could be done for the family, but they are a part of my daily concern no longer.

The society’s analysis recognizes eighteen different types of

cases, specified in the following way: physical cruelty, mother's intemperance, father's intemperance, mother's immorality, father's immorality, feeble-mindedness, physical neglect, moral neglect, non-support, assault, rape, incest, abandonment, child labor, truancy, illegal theater performance, guardianship, adoption. More than one of these conditions may be, and very frequently are, combined in one family. It is easy to see how involved and complicated the problem may be in many cases. The examples which have just been considered were those where it did not appear advisable to remove the children from their home environment. In many cases, however, that seems to be the only course to pursue. To do this, of course, a legal action is necessary. As already explained, the customary course of procedure is to get out a warrant for the child as a neglected child. This warrant is served by a regular police officer, and the child is arraigned before a regular judge, or in Boston before the judge of the juvenile court. The agent of the society appears as the complainant. A date is set for the hearing, and the child is put in the custody of whomever the judge sees fit. In or near Boston, if the child is a Catholic, he is usually put in the Home for Destitute Catholic Children, and if Protestant, left in charge of the S.P.C.C., who keep him in their temporary home. This is located in the office building of the society, occupying the upper floors and roof, and can accommodate about twenty children. It is not a permanent home, and children are kept here only while their cases are pending. A summons is issued to the parent or guardian of the child to appear at the trial, and notice is also sent to the State Board of Charity, whose representative is usually present. In a majority of cases, the parents have no lawyer, and then the judge gives a broad interpretation to the rules of evidence, allowing hearsay to be brought in and taking the agent's word for almost everything. But occasionally the parents bring in a lawyer, and then the trial has to proceed in the regular manner, with sworn witnesses on both sides, and greater formality.

This is the commonest type of court case with which the society deals. It usually rests on physical or moral neglect, or physical abuse of the child. But there is a variety of other sorts of cases

with which the agents of the society are concerned. Sometimes the conditions are such as to make it best to arraign the child as a wayward or stubborn child. I had one case of a boy who was an inveterate runaway, and whose home surroundings were such as to give no hope of correcting this tendency, on the part of his parents. He had to be sent to an industrial school. Again, the father is so neglectful of his family that it becomes a plain case of non-support. Then he is made the defendant, and the case is tried in the regular criminal court. One of the agents spends a large share of his time on non-support cases. The society has succeeded in several instances in getting extradition from other states for non-supporting and deserting husbands. One peculiar type is the "periodical deserter," who habitually abandons his family just before the birth of each new child. The society never takes children away when either of the parents is doing his or her best for their welfare.

Cases arising from the abuse of young girls have occupied a great deal of attention on the part of the society during the last two or three years. The report for 1909 says:

During the past year the society has undertaken an unusually large amount of work in the protection of young girls, and the prosecution of those who have inflicted unmentionable injuries upon them. The two women agents have devoted most of their time to this work. Through their efforts, eighty-six cases involving immoral conduct with young girls were brought to the attention of various courts of the commonwealth. These involved the most flagrant conduct imaginable on the part of a considerable number of men, fifty-three of whom were brought into court. Of this number only five were dismissed from the custody. Two women were also convicted as accessories. . . . The girls in question ranged in age from ten to seventeen, and by far the largest number of them were under fifteen. . . . This is an abuse against which our communities have not yet learned to protect their children adequately. No city or town of any considerable size is free from this corruption.

The problem of the mother with the illegitimate child is a very common one, and one of the most difficult and delicate to deal with. The law is such as to make it difficult to legally compel the actual father to assume a satisfactory responsibility for the child. But the society often succeeds in bringing this about by the force of its authority and influence. There are several solutions of this

problem, marriage, adoption of the child, finding work for the mother where she can have the child with her in a community where she is not known, etc. One of the most difficult points of decision comes when the welfare of the child must be balanced against that of the mother. Often, the child is the one tie which binds the mother to semi-respectability, the one barrier which blocks the easy descent into a life of complete depravity. To take such a child away is a serious step, while to leave it may be still more so.

But when a child has been taken from its parents, for whatever cause, the work is only partly done. The question still remains, What shall be done with it? It has been removed from one environment because it was believed to be unfit to train it for useful manhood or womanhood. Where shall be found a new set of surroundings which shall possess the required elements? With this part of the problem, the S.P.C.C. has but little to do directly. It almost never places out any children, but leaves that to some one of the other agencies. The majority of them are committed to the State Board of Charity, which through their Department of Minor Wards places them out in individual family homes, retaining jurisdiction of them until they are twenty-one. If they are Catholics, particularly in and around Boston, they are often turned over to one or another of the Catholic societies to be placed out, while the placing of Protestant children is occasionally intrusted to the Children's Aid Society, the Children's Mission, or some similar agency. Sometimes, as has been shown, a child has to be sent to an institution. It is rarely that the judge pronounces a final and irrevocable sentence of removal. Usually, a continuance is granted, giving the parents a chance to prove themselves worthy to have the children back. The S.P.C.C. keeps general oversight of all such cases. When not committed to the state board, the society never loses track of a child which has once been placed in its care until it is of age, though it never undertakes a new case when the child is over sixteen. Sometimes the Overseers of the Poor, or, in Boston, the Trustees for Children may be placed in charge.

The placing of a child in the custody of persons other than the parents is made a matter of no little ceremony and solemnity. All parties concerned in the transaction are brought before the judge,



who explains in simple but emphatic terms to the new custodian the responsibility he is assuming, impresses the child with the necessity of good conduct and obedience to the new authority, and makes it very plain to the parents that their only hope of getting the child back lies in establishing a home which shall meet those requirements of helpfulness and decency which the society establishes. The good results of such careful placing out are often striking. I was called on to play a minor part in a late chapter in one of the old cases of the society. The family was one of the most hopeless imaginable, and had utterly failed to respond to the efforts of the society, and the children had been removed. The oldest boy had secured a good position, and at the time I came into the case, he had got the promise of work in the same shop where he was, for his next youngest brother. He wished his brother to be dismissed from the institutional home in which he had been placed by court order, and to be put in his (the elder's) charge as guardian. My part was to investigate the shop in which the elder brother worked, and the home in which he lived, as well as his fitness to take charge of his younger brother. I found him one of the most attractive young men I ever met. It was almost impossible to believe that he had come out of the home surroundings which I knew had been his in early life.

Out of my summer's experiences and observations emerged a few reflections and generalizations, some of which may bear noting down: First, the very tender age at which children, under wrong conditions, become habituated to ways of vice and crime. I was present at the conviction of a charming little eight-year-old boy for larceny. At another time I represented the society at the transfer of a little girl from an institution to a private home. She had been in the former home a year, having been taken from a life of open shame on the streets. She was, at the time I saw her, eleven years of age. Such facts as these emphasize the need in every city of a juvenile court which shall be really a court and really juvenile. Another thing which is most striking is the love of parents for children which exists in the most degraded circumstances, even in conjunction with the most flagrant abuse and neglect. The threat of the removal of the children is the most powerful argument which

the agent can wield, and it seldom fails to elicit some sort of response. The devotion of wives to worthless husbands is a pathetically common thing. A husband may come home drunk every night, and shamefully abuse the wife who toils all day to earn the means for his support, and yet only in extremities will she fail to stand up for him and shield him in the presence of the agent.

I was, personally, impressed with the fortitude with which the majority of those with whom I dealt bore misfortunes and shames which would be absolutely crushing in other stations. It seems as if the poor and unfortunate became so calloused by the daily hardships, deprivation and griefs of life, that any great calamity has power to move them only moderately. Their emotions seem deadened, almost sodden. Perhaps it is a blessing for them that it is so, but it scarcely exonerates society for permitting conditions which breed such a state of mind.

The very limited requirements for a tolerable family relation are also most amazing. In a higher walk of life, if a husband should come home at night drunk and beat his wife, accusing her of the vilest sins in the calendar, and she should have him arrested and sent up for three months for assault and battery, we should not have much hope of the speedy re-establishment of harmonious relations in that particular family. But not so among the other half. After a few days, the wife becomes lonesome and relents. She secures the discharge of her husband, and life together is resumed on as much of a footing of mutual regard as existed before. Of course, this does not always happen, but it is far from uncommon.

One of the cheering things about the work is the spirit of neighborly helpfulness that exists among the submerged classes. It is almost always safe to count on the assistance of neighbors to keep an unfortunate family from acute distress, while the society is determining its course of action, or getting the machinery of relief in motion. One thing that impressed me, perhaps more than anything else, was the tremendous rôle played by drink and sexual immorality in the work of the society. As far as my own experience goes, it is safe to say that behind nine out of every ten cases of neglect and abuse of children lurks one or the other of these

grim specters—or both. As the old janitor of the society said: “If we could just do away with drink and vice, this society might just about as well close its doors.”

It remains finally to speak of the enormous amount of good that the society is doing. The mere existence of such an organization acts as a powerful check on the actions of passionate, reckless, or thoughtless parents. But much more important are the positive results which it accomplishes. I have already spoken of this, but it deserves emphasis. In conversation with the general agent, I spoke of the work as depressing. He admitted that it was at first, but observed that after one had been in the work longer, and could begin to see results, the aspect changed completely, and I could see that it was true. Things are usually just about as bad as they can be when the society takes hold, and any results achieved must be in the way of improvement. The possibilities of good in every child, however unfortunate his early surroundings, are the hope and the inspiration of the society.